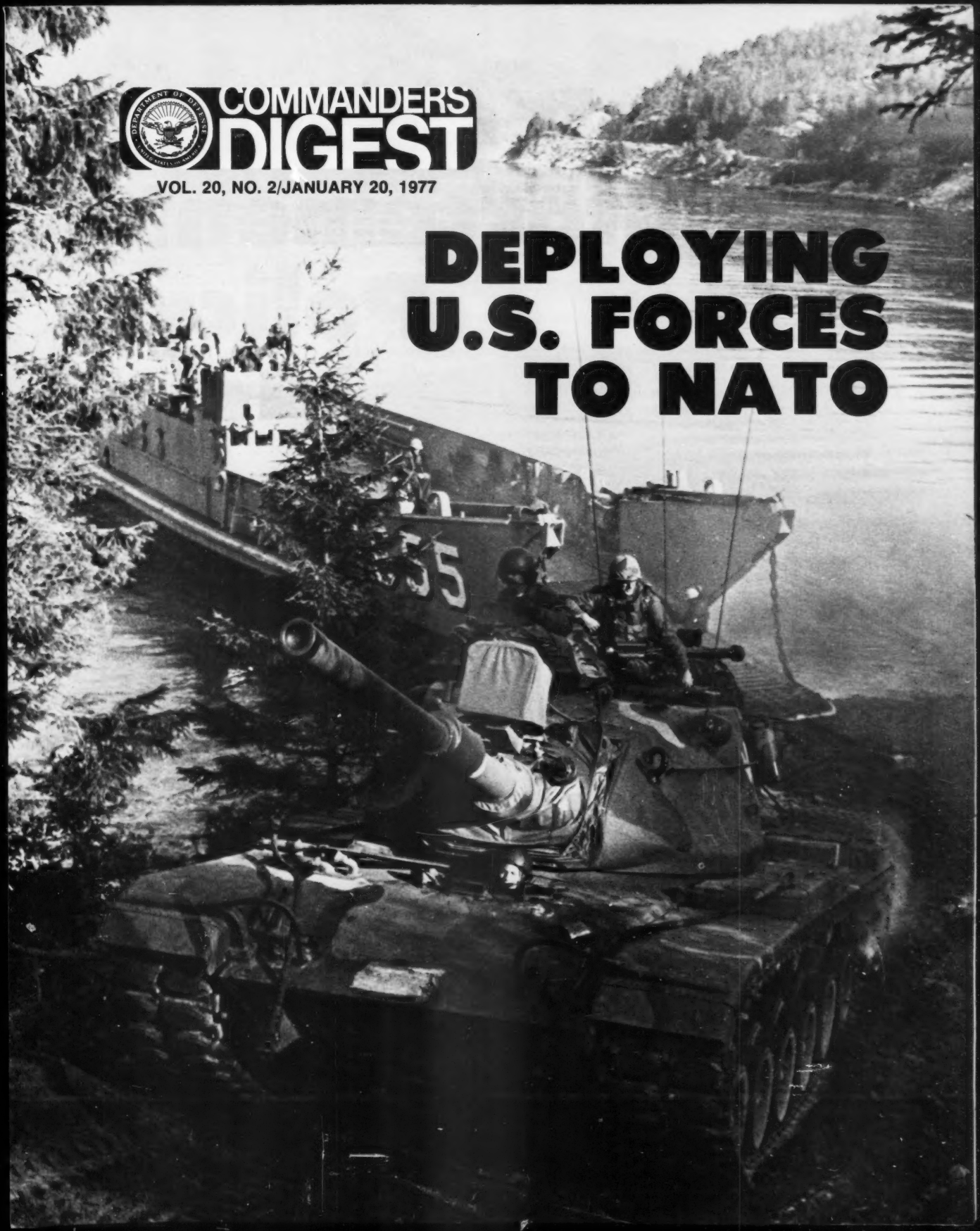
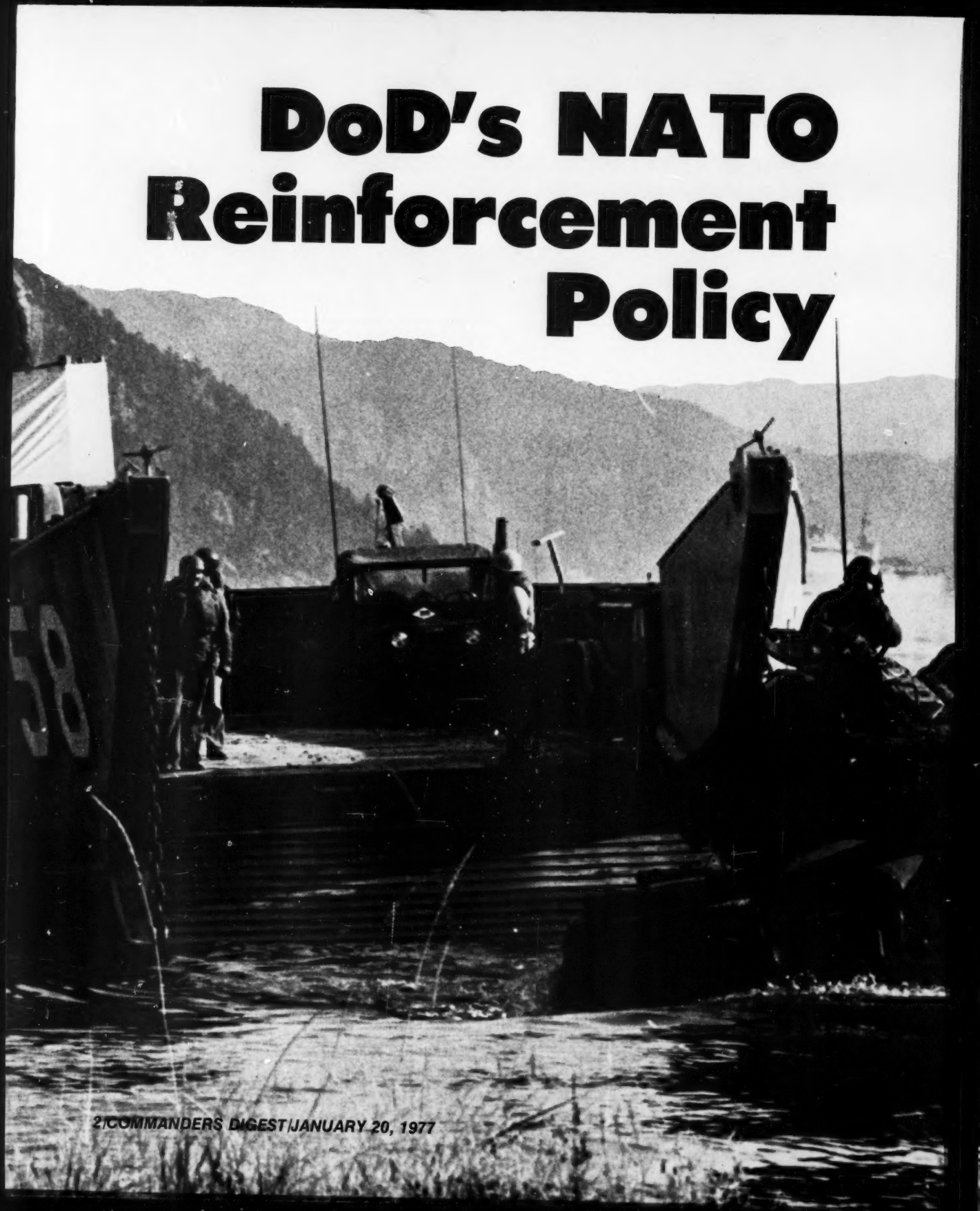


COMMANDERS DIGEST

VOL. 20, NO. 2/JANUARY 20, 1977

DEPLOYING U.S. FORCES TO NATO

DoD's NATO Reinforcement Policy



The major goal of U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense policy is to deter a Warsaw Pact attack. With the advent of strategic nuclear parity, NATO adopted a flexible response strategy as the best means to achieve deterrence. That is, NATO must have both sufficient standing and mobilizable forces to make the risks of an attack sufficiently high to the Pact to deter such aggression. The United States' NATO allies continue to support this strategy. Most NATO countries have continued to increase their defense expenditures and improve their forces, particularly in anti-tank weapons. Currently, however, without a strong U.S. presence it is unlikely that NATO could achieve an adequate conventional defense capability. Furthermore, any major reduction in U.S. forces, even if the allies were able to take up the difference, would greatly destabilize both the Alliance and the existing international order.

The intentions of Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact leaders can never be known with confidence. However, as recently as last year, Leonid Brezhnev, Communist Party First Secretary, reemphasized support for Communist struggles abroad, such as in Angola. Capabilities, on the other hand, can be assessed with greater assurance. Where Soviet and Pact military capability is perceived to be superior, that perception alone may be sufficient to change the world in ways disadvantageous to the United States.

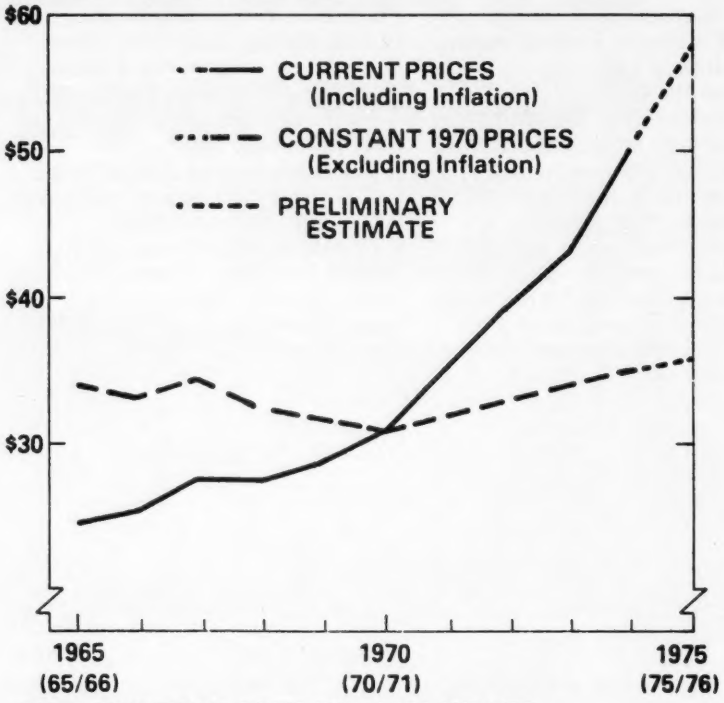
Soviet Forces Increase

In the last 10 years Soviet forces in Europe have increased by more than 100,000 personnel. U.S. military strength in Europe during this period declined about 100,000. Other Warsaw Pact and NATO force levels have been relatively stable. The Warsaw Pact ground forces in the Central Region number more than 925,000 personnel, 16,000 tanks and more

than 3,000 tactical aircraft in combat units. NATO ground forces in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and BENELUX (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg) countries total more than 777,000 men, 6,000 tanks and slightly less than 2,000 tactical aircraft. The Warsaw Pact has continued to improve its forces, strengthen its divisions and add tanks and new armored personnel carriers. Improved Fishbed, Fitter, Flogger, Foxbat and Fencer aircraft have been added to the Pact forces in the Central Region. The Soviet Navy, which for years did little more than defend its shores, has been outproducing the United States in combat ships and now has a modern, efficient and offensively oriented Navy which operates worldwide. The Warsaw Pact ground force is clearly tank heavy and capable of "blitzkrieg" warfare. The Soviets also probably have the capability to sustain heavy losses. They currently outproduce the United States in tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery pieces and fighter/attack aircraft. But, it is in the early days of any conflict in Europe that the Warsaw Pact would enjoy its greatest relative advantage.

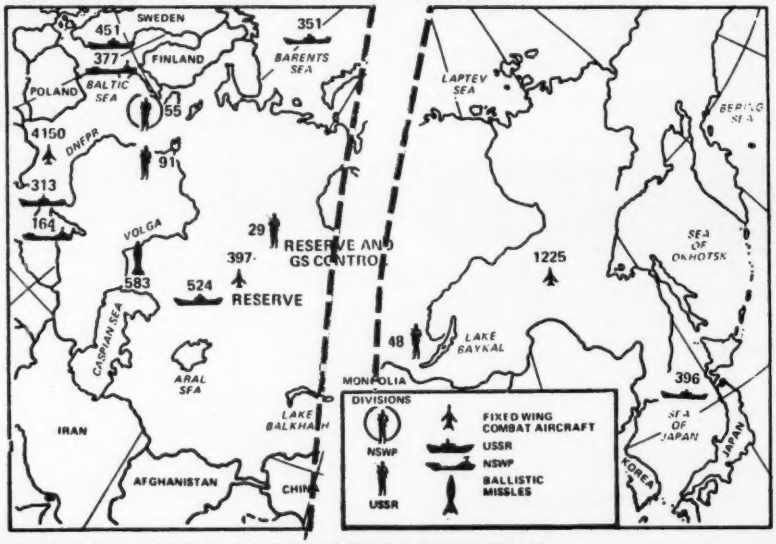
In order to deter an attack by this formidable force, NATO needs to maintain both standing and mobilizable conventional forces. NATO has the basic resources, measured in population, Gross National Product (GNP), and peacetime forces to achieve this conventional defense capability together with the United States. If the Pact mobilizes, NATO should be able to detect these activities, reinforce the existing forces and continue to maintain an adequate defense. To do this, however, U.S. reinforcements are essential. The United States must have the capability to deploy these reinforcements, and must be prepared to act promptly.

TRENDS IN EUROPEAN NATO TOTAL DEFENSE SPENDING (INCLUDING FRANCE)[a] (U.S. DOLLARS IN BILLIONS)

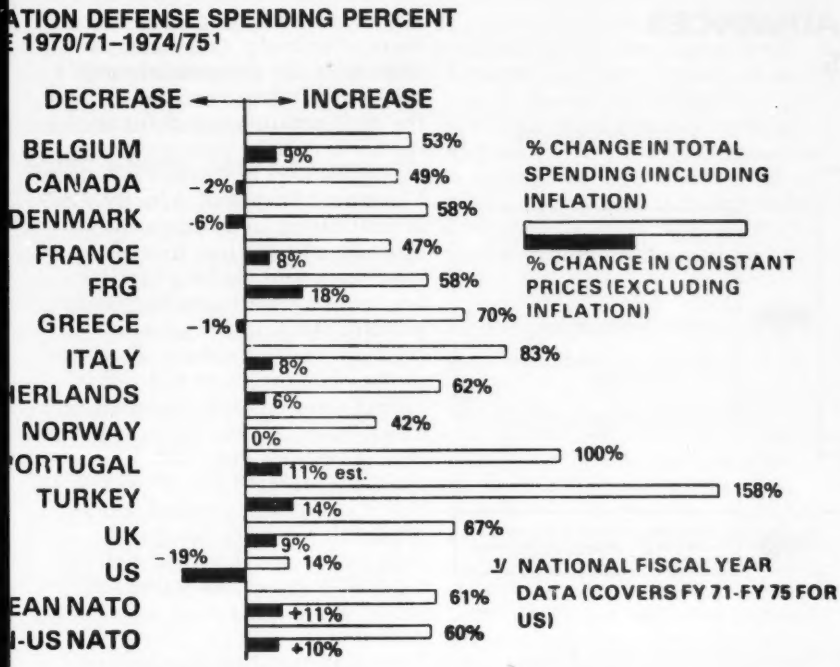


[a] BASED ON NATIONAL FISCAL YEAR DATA AND 1975 EXCHANGE RATES

DISPOSITION OF WARSAW PACT FORCES[1]



[1] BLACK SEA FIGURES INCLUDE SHIPS IN THE CASPIAN SEA



Peacetime Forces

During peacetime, the allies provide the preponderance of the total ground forces to NATO, about 75 per cent of the aircraft and most of the ships. The United States contributes only about 10 per cent of NATO's total peacetime military manpower or about 25 per cent of the total Central Region forces.

The contribution of U.S. forward deployed forces to NATO is far greater than these numbers might suggest, however. The U.S. forces are among the best trained and equipped. They provide added assurance of the U.S. commitment to Europe, they would help to defend against an unreinforced attack and they would assist in the transition to war and reception of reinforcements. And they do this at relatively low cost. If all U.S. troops in Europe were withdrawn to the United States and maintained in a state of readiness adequate for a rapid deployment to Europe in time of emergency — a proposal few could find attractive after examining Warsaw Pact force improvements — the savings would be about $265 million per year. However, it would cost about $11 billion to base these forces in the United States, preposition equipment in Europe and provide the lift to redeploy them in time to meet a rapid attack. Any withdrawal of U.S. forces would destablize the Alliance and the international order even if the other allies could increase their forces, an event that would be unlikely.

Significant steps have been made in reducing support and increasing the combat component of U.S. forces in Europe. This has been achieved by reducing headquarters and other support activities. It has also been achieved by shifting support from in-theater to the Continental United States (CONUS), from active to Reserve units and from the United States to the allies. It is too early to assess with confidence the impact on operational readiness of these significant changes. But it is obvious that more sophisticated means are needed now to measure force effectiveness. U.S. forward deployed and deployable forces must be viewed as systems rather than as separable components.

Complex Matter

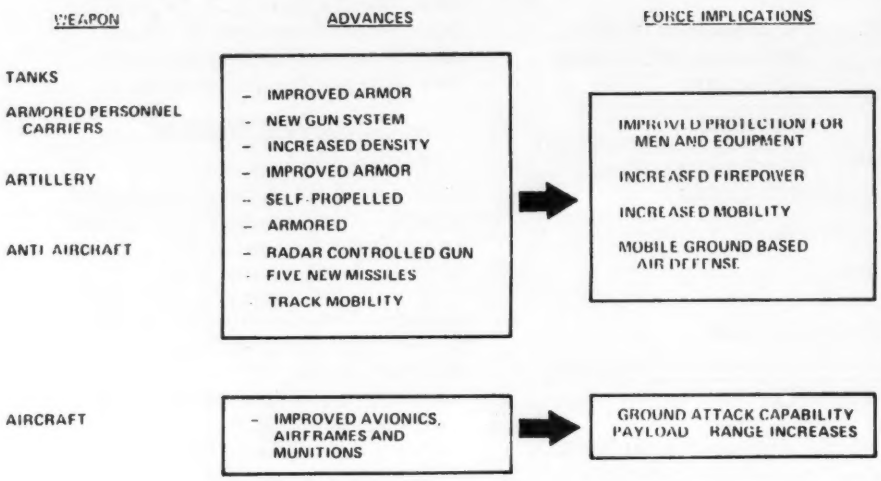
The mobilization and deployment of U.S. reinforcements to Europe in the event of conflict is a complex matter involving all Services, components, and numerous defense and nondefense agencies. This overall process can be viewed in three generally distinct phases:

- mobilization and preparation;
- deployment; and
- reception and employment.

Since the Warsaw Pact can expect its greatest relative advantage in the early days of conflict, the Department of Defense (DoD) is making every effort to simplify, streamline and speed up the mobilization and deployment process. The sequence of units to be deployed is continually reviewed. The Army equipment distribution plan was developed to allocate equipment to both active and Reserve component (RC) units in accordance with their deployment sequence. Reserve component unit readiness and deployment status is being improved. Some aspects of the reception and intra-theater movement plans still need to be improved. However, significant progress has been made. In many cases unit equipment and personnel would move by different means. This equipment and these people must be matched in theater during conflict. DoD is relying on host nation support to assist in these wartime logistics functions.

One area in which Defense must make significant improvements is that of inter-theater deployment. The amount of warning time available before a Pact attack is an

SOVIET WEAPON ADVANCES
1965-1975



important but not entirely controllable parameter in mobilization and deployment planning. Lift assets, prepositioned stocks and unit availability, however, are controllable over time.

Dominant Factor

These analyses show that, with current forces, appropriate use of warning time is the dominant factor in effective reinforcement during the early period of conflict. Later in the conflict, however, Reserve component availability is the primary factor in constraining deployment rates. Clearly Reserve readiness and availability must be improved in the near term. The Army OMNIBUS study is one effort to assess this force readiness with greater precision.

Current programs will substantially improve DoD's deployment capability over the next five years. Some of these improvements are already underway. Others require Congressional support. Three actions are particularly important: improving Reserve component unit availability, the airlift enhancement program and the reconstitution of prepositioned stocks in Europe. With these programs, the United States deployed combat capability measured in armored division equivalents will improve considerably.

Defense is continuing other force improvements as well. DoD is continuing to examine the mix of active and Reserve component units in the total U.S. force. This is a follow-on to the "Total Force Study" of 1975. We are continuing to rely even more on the Reserve component in plans for reinforcing Europe. DoD also is continuing to seek new initiaties whereby Alliance resources can be used more effectively. One example illustrates the progress already achieved: Defense now relies on the host nation support for the initial long haul wartime ground transportation in Europe (Wartime Movement Program). Finally, DoD is continuing to examine the military and civilian mix of the total force and shifting civilian employees from lower to higher priority tasks. In the process, military personnel have also been shifted from support to combat.

This article is not designed to describe the worldwide aspects of a NATO/Warsaw Pact war. It examines current and projected U.S. deployment capabilities for reinforcing NATO Europe. Although a conventional defense capability is not beyond reach today, given the recent significant improvements in the Warsaw Pact, it is important that the Defense Department improve its deployment capability. The Department of Defense, however, has taken several actions to improve this capability. Several of these areas are:

- POMCUS (Prepositioned Material Configured to Unit Set) reconstitution;
- Airlift Enhancement Program;
- 16 Division Active Force and conversion of two divisions from light to heavy;

- RC unit availability improvements;
- Shipbuilding;
- Resolution of mobilization manpower shortages;

Pact Force Improvement

As mentioned earlier, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries have continued over the past decade to increase their military resources, including substantial improvements in the forces available for a conventional conflict in Europe. At the same time, the United States and NATO allies have also made significant force improvements. European allies of the United States continue to increase their resources committed to force readiness and modernization, even during times of tight fiscal constraint. They are continuing their commitment to the collective security of Europe.

The United States must also maintain its contribution to a strong NATO posture in Europe. The credibility of the U.S. commitment to NATO is directly related both to the presence of U.S. forward deployed forces and to the clearly perceived ability to reinforce rapidly those units in response to any Soviet aggression. A strong and stable U.S. force is essential if NATO is to maintain a conventional capability to deter a Pact attack and to keep the nuclear threshold high.

If deterrence fails and a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict ensues, the Pact would have, as pointed out earlier, a dangerous advantage in the early period of a war in spite of general mobilization in Europe. U.S. reinforcements must deploy rapidly if an acceptable conventional defense capability is to be maintained. To improve this rapid reinforcement capability, the DoD needs continued Congressional support for planned force improvements, sufficient trained manpower available for deployment, and prompt political action to use the reinforcements when required.

Completion of the 16 division active Army structure, reconstitution of POMCUS stocks, and improved Reserve component readiness are force improvements already underway. The creation of the 16 division structure has been possible, in great part, through the successful Affiliation Program in the Army. The three new divisions have been developed with heavy reliance on affiliated Reserve component units. These new divisions will allow Defense to deploy more trained combat strength early in any reinforcement of Europe.

The current condition of DoD's POMCUS stocks is of great concern. The degraded condition of these stocks would not only slow down the deployment of units dependent upon these stocks but would also tax strategic mobility assets in the early critical days of mobilization.

The lack of modern equipment has often been cited as a serious problem affecting Army Reserve component readiness. However, with the implementation of the Affiliation Program, the Army has introduced an equipment distribution plan which insures that early deploying units, both active and reserve, receive priority for equipment fills. This plan, together with a reconstituted POMCUS, should go far toward improving U.S. deployment capability.

Reserve Readiness

Reserve readiness has received much needed support from Congress. In the past there has been some reluctance to rely on Reserve component units because their capabilities have been unproved. However, Reserve units are now authorized to participate in NATO exercises. With the restriction removed on training outside CONUS, DoD will also improve Reserve readiness for mobilization by initiating mobilization exercises as a regular part of annual training.

The Airlift Enhancement Program is a long-term effort to upgrade Defense's capability for rapid reinforcement of combat forces overseas. This program focuses on the early reinforcement of NATO and will provide the necessary assets, including crews and aircraft spares, to undertake major deployments in the critical first few weeks of conflict when the Warsaw Pact can expect its greatest advantage. It is an essential element in improving U.S. deployment capability.

Sealift complements the early movement of military equipment by air and is the dominant mode of sustaining forces in any lengthy contingency.

Sealift factors have remained fairly constant resulting in emphasis on airlift enhancement and POMCUS. Notwithstanding this emphasis, the requirement for a substantial and responsive sealift capability remains. Continuing Congressional support for the National Defense Reserve Fleet enhancement program is also essential in improving U.S. deployment capability.

Manpower Support

The projected shortfall in manpower to support the rapid deployment of forces is a matter of serious concern. Defense foresees a major problem in the ability to meet manpower mobilization requirements. There is a need for a pool of trained and experienced military personnel who, together with DoD's active duty and Selected Reserve personnel, can man and sustain the existing combat force structure in the initial months of conflict. There must be, at the same time, a mechanism that will assure a supply of untrained entrants, as a hedge against the possibility of a long-term conflict. Also a mechanism must be devised which, in the event of a NATO conflict, could be used to tap the large pool of trained and experienced military personnel with recent service.

Finally, what is needed most is the continued recognition that long term U.S. interests are best served by a stable but improving U.S. force posture in Europe. DoD must strike that balance of forces which it can support militarily, politically and economically. And, these forces must be supported as long as the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union maintain the formidable forces they have today.

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